

Alternative Transportation in Parks and Public Lands Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What is alternative transportation?

A: The program's legislation defines alternative transportation as "transportation by bus, rail, or any other publicly or privately owned conveyance that provides to the public general or special service on a regular basis, including sightseeing service. Such term also includes a nonmotorized transportation system (including the provision of facilities for pedestrians, bicycles, and nonmotorized watercraft)."

Q: What level of need for alternative transportation has been identified in national parks and public lands?

A: There is a strong need for alternative transportation in national parks and public lands. National Parks and other federal lands have documented traffic congestion in and around popular parks and public lands that have led to traffic delays and noise and air pollution that substantially detract from the visitor's experience and the protection of natural resources. The Departments of Transportation and Interior published a report to Congress in 2001 that identified over \$600 million in alternative transportation needs between 2001 and 2010. This is far more than the \$97 million authorized over four years for the Alternative Transportation in Parks and Public Lands program. Another indicator of the high level of need is that in FY 2006, we received about twice as many project proposals as we were able to fund.

Q: Who can receive funding through this program?

A. The ATPPL program may fund projects serving any Federally-owned or managed park, refuge, or recreational area open to the general public for recreation. Recipients of funding may include any Federal land management agency or State, local, or tribal government authority that is in the vicinity of the federal land. The only qualifying factor for a State, local, or tribal government is that they act with the consent of the Federal land management agency.

Q: What does it mean that a State, local, or tribal government must have the consent of the Federal land management agency affected?

A. According to the program's legislation, State, local, and tribal governments seeking funding through the program must have the consent of the Federal land management agency affected. This is to ensure that the Federal land management agency can fulfill its mission of managing the land for which it is responsible in accordance with its management goals and plans. As explained in FTA's December 5th *Federal Register* notice, State, local, and tribal governments submitting a proposal for funding through the program must submit a letter of support for the project signed by the manager of the federal land unit affected. This is how FTA will ensure that the State, local, or tribal government has the consent of the federal land management agency.

Q: Can a private company receive funding through the program?

A: While private companies are not eligible to be direct recipients of FTA funding through this program, recipients of funding may contract with private companies to provide transportation services. In fact, many of the alternative transportation systems now operating on public lands are run by private companies under contract with a public entity.

Q: How competitive was the selection in 2006?

A: Very competitive. The 42 projects selected were chosen from 78 project proposals submitted by four federal land management agencies. Overall, the proposed projects requested a total of \$40.5 million, twice the amount of funding available for 2006.

Q: Who is involved in the selection of projects?

A: Following an initial review by the sponsoring agency, an interagency Technical Review Committee comprised of staff from FTA, the Department of the Interior, the National Park Service, the Fish and Wildlife Service, the Bureau of Land Management, and the Forest Service, will carefully review the project proposals. The committee evaluates the proposals based on criteria listed in the law. Then, as specified in the program's legislation, the Department of the Interior makes the final selection of projects, in cooperation and consultation with FTA.

Q: What criteria are used to select projects?

A: The evaluation criteria are based on the goals and criteria laid out in the law. They include such factors as severity of the problem, natural resource protection, reduced congestion, reduced pollution, visitor experience, accessibility, safety, and financial sustainability. Additional consideration is given to projects based upon geographic diversity, balance between urban and rural projects, and balance in size of projects. The proposal guidance further explains the criteria and the proposal forms contain questions to guide applicants in responding to the criteria. Links to those documents are found below.

http://www.fta.dot.gov/documents/FY_2007_ATPPL_Proposal_Guidance.doc

http://www.fta.dot.gov/documents/FY_2007_ATPPL_Implementation_Proposal_Form.doc

http://www.fta.dot.gov/documents/FY_2007_ATPPL_Planning_Proposal_Form.doc

Q: Bicycle and pedestrian trails are eligible under this program. Why were none funded in fiscal year 2006?

A: [Best to defer to DOI.] As required in law, the Department of the Interior determined the final selection of projects, in cooperation and consultation with FTA. Based on agency priorities for this program, Interior selected only public transportation projects for this first year.

Q: When is the application deadline?

A: February 16, 2007

Q: Who do I submit my project proposal to?

A: The contact at the headquarters office of the federal land management agency affected, as listed in FTA's December 5th Federal Register notice, available at www.fta.dot.gov/atppl. If more than one federal land management agency is affected, you should send the proposal to the contact for each agency affected.

Q: What types of expenses are eligible?

A: Capital and planning expenses for alternative transportation systems are eligible. For a detailed description of eligible expenses, see FTA's December 5, 2006, *Federal Register* notice soliciting proposals, available at www.fta.dot.gov/atppl.

Q: Are operating expenses eligible?

A: No. Operating expenses such as salaries for bus drivers, fuel, cleaning, and maintenance are not eligible under the program. As specified in the legislation, only capital and planning expenses are eligible.

Q: When will project selections be announced?

A: Project selections will most likely be announced in June or July 2007.

Q: How are the funds administered?

A: Funding to State, local, and tribal recipients is administered through an FTA grant, managed through the FTA regional offices (see http://www.fta.dot.gov/regional_offices.html for the list of regional offices and contact information). These grants are managed like other FTA grants, through FTA's electronic grants management system, TEAM. Many State and local governments are already FTA grantees through other FTA programs.

Funding to Federal land management agency recipients is administered through interagency agreements. These agreements function as reimbursable agreements. When the Federal land management agency incurs an expense, it requests reimbursement through the Intergovernmental Payment and Collection (IPAC) System. The Federal land management agency must provide documentation supporting all charges.

Q: When can I expect the grant awards and interagency agreements to be signed?

A: In fiscal year 2006, both the first grant award and the first interagency agreement were signed within two weeks of the announcement of project selections. The timing of signing the grant awards and interagency agreements depends on recipients submitting required information and reviewing the agreement. Changes made to agreements may delay the process.

Q: When can I start incurring expenses?

A: Recipients have “pre-award” authority under this program. Pre-award authority allows an agency that will receive a grant or interagency agreement to incur certain project costs prior to receipt of the grant or interagency agreement and retain eligibility of the costs for subsequent reimbursement after the grant or agreement is approved. The recipient assumes all risk and is responsible for ensuring that all conditions are met to retain eligibility, including compliance with Federal requirements, such as the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), and provisions established in the grant contract or interagency agreement. FTA will publish in the *Federal Register* the date that recipients may begin incurring expenses under pre-award authority. This will be the date that the project selections are publicly announced. For more information on pre-award authority and the conditions for exercising this authority, see FTA’s September 12, 2006, *Federal Register* notice at <http://www.fta.dot.gov/documents/E6-15095.pdf>.

Q: Can I use the funds for something other than what is described in my project proposal?

A: No. Because this is a competitive program and projects were selected based on the information in the proposal, recipients must use funds only for projects described in the proposal.

Q: What are the reporting requirements?

A: FTA requires brief quarterly milestone/progress reports. State and local government entities should submit this information through FTA’s electronic grants management System, TEAM. The headquarters office for each Federal land management agency should collect a quarterly report for each of the projects delineated in the interagency agreement and then send these reports to FTA. A sample report can be found at http://www.fta.dot.gov/documents/Quarterly_Report_Doc.pdf.

FTA also requests that funding recipients submit certain data in order to allow FTA to compute aggregate program performance measures as required by the President’s Management Agenda. FTA requests that recipients of funding for capital projects under the ATPPL program submit the following information annually as part of the fourth quarter report:

- § Annual visitation to the land unit;
- § Annual number of persons who use the alternative transportation system (ridership/usage);
- § An estimate of the number of vehicle trips mitigated based on alternative transportation system usage and the typical number of passengers per vehicle;
- § Cost per passenger; and
- § A note of any special services offered for those systems with higher costs per passenger but more amenities.

An OMB control number is being requested in order to require this information of State, local and tribal recipients. An OMB control number is not needed to require this information of federal agency recipients.

Q: Where can I find more information about the program?

A: More information is available on the program's webpage at www.fta.dot.gov/atppl.